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**Bill sets guidelines for stroke, heart attack care**

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. (AP) -- Stroke and heart attack patients in Missouri could get faster, better help that will improve their chances for survival under a new state law.

Legislation signed by Gov. Matt Blunt on Friday created a "Time Critical Diagnosis System" for stroke and a fatal type of heart attack called ST-elevation myocardial infarction, or STEMI.

The legislation requires emergency medical services to take people with acute stroke and STEMI to a designated center of care first, rather than taking them to the closest facility, said Dr. Scott Duff, who led the task force that developed the legislation.

"The sooner we treat people, the better they do," said Duff, of CoxHealth in Springfield.

Incoming stroke patients will get "reperfusion therapy," or tPA, a clot-busting drug, as soon as possible, Duff said.

After a stroke, doctors have about three hours to try to get blood flow back to the brain.